THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Interim Report of the National Commission on Farmers has recommended raising of import duty on cotton (except extra long fine cotton) from 10% to 30% *ad valorem*.

(c) Import duty rate on goods, including cotton, are fixed taking into account all material factors such as the need to protect the domestic producers of cotton, the need to make available raw materials to user industry at reasonable prices etc. Import duty rates shall be reviewed as part of the budget exercise.

Refusal to issue fresh Customs House Agents Licences

2914. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether fresh Customs House Agents Licences that are to be given regularly in January every year by Commissioners of Customs are being denied to many eligible aspirants in the trade as they are not opened for offer annually and wherever opened, are still not given to all the eligible aspirants their meeting all the conditions of the CHA-Licensing regulations; and

(b) if so, the reasons for the irregularity in such process which severely affects thousands of aspirants for CHA-Licenses across the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir. Regulation 4 of the Customs House Agents Licensing Regulations, 2004 provides that the Commissioner of Customs may invite applications for the grant of such number of Licences as assessed by him, to act as Customs House Agents, in the month of January every year. However only candidates who fulfil the precribed condition, pass the qualifying written and oral examinations and pay the prescribed fee are granted a Licence.

(b) Nil in view of reply at (a) above.

Rescheduling of loans to farmers in Tamil Nadu

2915. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN:
SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that due to rains and floods in Tamil Nadu recently the crops were damaged causing havoc to farmers;